

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

approved December 4, 2024

Introduction

At Dallas International School (DIS), the well-being and safety of our students are at the core of our educational philosophy. We believe that every student has the right to attend school in an environment where they feel secure, respected, and supported. A safe learning environment is foundational to a student's ability to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. As such, any form of bullying or harassment—including cyberbullying—is entirely incompatible with the values of our school community and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Bullying undermines the trust and respect that should characterize relationships among students and between students and staff. It disrupts the educational experience for everyone involved and can have long-lasting negative effects on both the victims and the perpetrators. At DIS, we are committed to fostering a culture of kindness, inclusion, and respect, where all students can focus on learning without fear of being bullied or harassed.

Definition

Bullying is defined as any **severe** or **pervasive** physical, verbal, or psychological act or conduct that is **repetitive** and **intentional**, where the relationship involves an **imbalance of power**. This conduct can include—but is not limited to—placing a reasonable student in fear of harm to their person or property, causing a substantial detrimental effect on their physical or mental health, significantly interfering with their academic performance, or substantially interfering with their ability to participate in or benefit from school activities.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- **Physical acts.** Such behavior may include hitting, tripping, shoving, pinching, or any other unwelcome physical contact.
- **Verbal or psychological acts.** These can include deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip, repetitive teasing, intentional embarrassment, and other forms of relational bullying.
- **Cyber-bullying.** Bullying through digital platforms, including social media, where offensive or hurtful public messages, images, or statements are placed on social networks or other public forums and can be viewed and/or repeated by others.
- **Identity-based bullying.** Bullying that targets an individual's identity, including one's sexual orientation, race, culture, religion, appearance, economic background, or gender.
- **Bully of those with special needs.** Targeting individuals based on their physical or mental conditions, including a disability, illness, or learning difference.
- **Misuse of peer pressure.** Using peer pressure to compel others to engage in bullying acts.

It is important to note that bullying is **not** an isolated or once-off incident of intentional negative behavior, including a single offensive or hurtful text message or other private message. Such incidents—while serious and potentially constituting harassment—do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be addressed according to the school's code of conduct and disciplinary response procedures.

Cyber-Bullying

Cyberbullying refers to any form of bullying or harassment conducted through electronic media. This includes, but is not limited to, the internet, social media, email, texting, sexting, instant messaging, cell phones, pagers, any wireless communication devices, bulletin boards, chat rooms, local or external networks, or any other form of electronically transmitted communication.

The following are some measures parents and guardians can take to assist in preventing and responding to cyber-bullying:

- **Monitor online activity.** Keep your child's computer in an open area of the house to make it easier to supervise what they are doing online.
- **Use internet filtering software.** Install internet filtering software with parental controls on the computer your child uses to limit access to inappropriate content.
- **Protect personal information.** Instruct your child never to give out personal information online.
- **Discuss online safety.** Make it clear to your child that people online are not always who they claim to be, and that sharing personal information with strangers is dangerous.
- **Warn against meeting online contacts in person.** Instruct your child never to meet in person with someone they have met online.
- **Discourage responses to offensive communications.** Advise your child not to respond to offensive or dangerous emails or messages.
- **Stay informed about your child's online habits.** Visit the websites your child frequents and be aware of their online activities.
- **Teach responsible cyber citizenship.** Educate your child on the importance of using good manners, being respectful of others, and practicing safety while online.
- **Encourage reporting.** Tell your child to report any material or communication that makes them uncomfortable or seems inappropriate.

Student Reporting of Bullying

Students who believe they have been victims of bullying or cyberbullying are strongly encouraged to report the incident immediately. Whether the bullying occurs on school grounds, during school-sponsored activities, or online, it is crucial that students inform a teacher, staff member, or school administrator as soon as possible.

At Dallas International School, we are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where every student feels secure and respected. We understand that reporting bullying can be difficult, but it is an essential step in stopping harmful behavior and protecting not only the individual student but the entire school community.

Students should feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and handled with sensitivity and confidentiality. The school staff is trained to listen, provide support, and take appropriate action to address any reports of bullying. By speaking up, students play an active role in fostering a school culture where bullying is not tolerated and where every student can learn and thrive without fear.

Students are also encouraged to report bullying even if they are not the direct victims. If a student witnesses bullying or is aware of someone else being bullied, they should come forward. DIS believes that the responsibility of maintaining a safe environment is shared by the entire community, and we are here to support students every step of the way.

Complaint and Response Procedures

The following procedures outline the steps that students, staff, and administration will take to ensure that complaints are addressed promptly, fairly, and in accordance with applicable laws and school policies. These procedures are designed to protect the rights of all individuals involved, maintain confidentiality, and ensure that appropriate actions are taken to resolve the situation and prevent further incidents.

- **Reporting bullying.** Any student who feels that they have been the victim of bullying, cyberbullying, or harassment should immediately report the incident to a teacher or school administrator, excluding the person(s) they believe engaged in the bullying conduct.
- **Consideration of child abuse or neglect.** School representatives receiving a complaint of bullying must consider whether the conduct in question constitutes child abuse or neglect, which would require compliance with applicable child protection laws in the State of Texas. If the conduct is covered by Texas statute, all school representatives involved shall promptly adhere to the reporting procedures required by Dallas International School's Child Protection Policy, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Texas Child Protective Services (CPS), and/or the statute in question.
- **Confidential investigations.** All investigations shall be conducted confidentially and in accordance with all applicable laws, including those related to privacy, consent, and search and seizure.
- **Confidentiality of records.** All records related to the investigation shall be maintained confidentially in a sealed investigation file and shall not be disclosed to any party except those to whom the results of the investigation are being reported, or as otherwise required or permitted by law.
- **Reports to law enforcement.** Matters involving bullying may require reporting to outside law enforcement agencies. School representatives investigating complaints of bullying shall consult with the Head of School to determine whether the matter should be referred to law enforcement and shall make such referral as appropriate based on that consultation.

Complaint Response

Complaints of bullying or harassment that are not covered under Texas law shall be immediately investigated by and responded to by senior school site administration as follows:

1. Initial student complaints of bullying or harassment may be made verbally, with a written complaint to follow as necessary.
2. The school representative receiving the complaint shall immediately communicate the complaint verbally to the Head of Campus or their designee in person or by telephone, followed by a written report to the Head of Campus or their designee within 24 hours of the initial complaint.
3. A member of the administrative team shall conduct an informal, preliminary investigation of the complaint in a professional and discreet manner. This preliminary investigation shall be completed promptly after receiving the complaint (within five school days whenever possible). A written report of the investigation shall be provided to the Head of Campus upon completion.

4. The Head of Campus shall independently determine whether further investigation is warranted or if additional actions are necessary. All recommendations concerning substantial misconduct or related complaints shall be forwarded to the Head of School. If any doubt exists regarding the need for further action, the matter shall be forwarded to the Head of School for a final determination.
5. If further investigation or response is deemed necessary, the Head of Campus and/or Head of School shall proceed with additional investigation or actions, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - conducting further interviews and gathering evidence;
 - facilitating a conflict resolution session between the students involved;
 - reassigning classroom placements; and/or
 - implementing student discipline, up to and including detention, probation, suspension, or expulsion.
6. Upon concluding the follow-up investigation, the investigating administrator shall prepare a detailed written report outlining the investigation conducted, identifying witnesses interviewed and evidence reviewed, and recommending any further actions to be taken, with the basis for such recommendations. Copies of evidence relied upon in the report and recommendations shall be attached as exhibits.
7. The follow-up investigation report shall be kept confidential and forwarded to the Head of Campus and/or Head of School for a final determination on further actions. The investigation, report, and recommendations shall be handled in accordance with Dallas International School's student discipline process, including any applicable rights of appeal.

Family Support and Involvement

At Dallas International School, we believe that parents and guardians play a crucial role in educating their children about bullying and supporting the school's efforts to prevent it. We are committed to involving families in this important work and encouraging their active participation in fostering a safe and respectful school environment. Below are some measures that parents and guardians can take to help prevent and respond to bullying:

- **Engage in open communication.** Talk with your child often and listen carefully to what they have to say, particularly if they mention being bullied.
- **Discuss the impacts of bullying.** Explain how bullying behavior can be hurtful to others and emphasize the importance of treating everyone with kindness and respect.
- **Set clear expectations.** Make behavioral expectations clear; be consistent with discipline when siblings or peers engage in hurtful teasing or bullying.
- **Model positive behavior.** Help your child understand the value of friendship by modeling friendly behavior and demonstrating how friends treat each other positively.
- **Promote individuality.** Discuss the fact that everyone is unique, and that individual characteristics and personalities make us who we are.
- **Teach manners and respect.** Model basic manners and respect within the family and encourage your child to apply these principles with friends and peers.
- **Encourage reporting.** Urge your child to tell an adult if they are being bullied, and reassure them that it is the right thing to do.

- **Stay informed.** Familiarize yourself with school rules, expected behaviors, and the consequences of bullying.
- **Get involved.** Participate in school activities, offer your services, and attend school-sponsored events to stay connected with the school community.
- **Communicate with teachers.** Maintain regular communication with your child's teacher to stay informed about their progress and any concerns.
- **Report bullying promptly.** If you become aware of bullying, report it to the school immediately so that appropriate actions can be taken.
- **Seek support.** If your child is involved in bullying—whether as a victim, bystander, or perpetrator—seek assistance from the school to address the situation effectively.
- **Keep records.** Document bullying incidents accurately and provide as much specific information as possible when reporting to school staff.

If your child has been the victim of bullying, it is important to build their confidence and reinforce their sense of independence with the following reassurances:

- **Affirm their worth.** Reassure your child that they are not at fault and that the bully's behavior is the problem, not them.
- **Emphasize respect.** Let your child know that everyone is entitled to respect and that they do not deserve to be bullied.
- **Collaborate with the school.** Assure your child that you will work closely with school staff to address and resolve the issue.
- **Involve school leadership.** Inform your child that you will meet with their teacher, the Head of Campus, or the Head of School to ensure the situation is handled appropriately.

Policy Review and Publication

This policy is reviewed regularly through collaborative planning, and final versions for publication are sent to and formally approved by the DIS Executive Leadership Team. The latest version of this policy is made available to the DIS community through the MyDIS platform.